Alberta

Campus Alberta Quality Council

2012-2015 Action Plan

Government of Alberta

Campus Alberta Quality Council

contact Campus Alberta Quality Council Secretariat

Internet http://www.caqc.gov.ab.ca

e-mail caqc@gov.ab.ca

phone 780-427-8921

toll free 310-0000

fax 780-427-4185

mail 11th Floor, Commerce Place
10155 - 102 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L5

Deaf callers with TTY equipment
phone 780-427-9999 (Edmonton)
toll free 1-800-232-7215 (other Alberta locations)

Copyright © 2012, the Crown in Right of the Province of Alberta,
as represented by the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology.
Permission is given by the copyright owner for any person to reproduce
this document for educational purposes and on a non-profit basis.

Message from the Chair

On behalf of the Campus Alberta Quality Council, I am pleased to provide you with our *2012-15 Action Plan*. This Action Plan, Council's first, has been developed in accordance with best-practices guidelines identified by the *Public Agencies Governance Framework*. It also attempts to align Council's strategic planning activities with Advanced Education and Technology's *Business Plan 2012-15*.

Our two core businesses (providing advice and recommendations with respect to new degree proposals and monitoring approved degree programs after implementation) set the context for the three goals which Council has identified for 2012-15: (1) CAQC's quality review processes are well developed, efficient and evidence-based; (2) degree programs approved on recommendation of CAQC continue to meet Council's quality standards and conditions; and (3) Council effectively communicates and collaborates with its stakeholders to maintain trust and serve the best interests of learners.

Some of our strategic initiatives stem from our key operating principles, such as keeping the best interests of learners at the centre of Council's activities as it assesses and monitors degree programs, and supporting innovative program design and pedagogical approaches that enhance program outcomes for learners. As an example, Council is currently discussing how best to ensure that our review process considers how new degree programs incorporate engaged and active learning methods.

Council will continue to foster development of a quality culture within autonomous degree granting institutions, as it believes that this culture will create new opportunities within the system to embrace new program delivery methods, explore possibilities for new collaborative arrangements, and provide the system with a stronger voice in the global education dialogue. Council also recognizes, however, that constrained financial resources will continue to pose a challenge for institutions striving to develop and maintain their internal quality assurance systems. We are committed to maintaining open communication with our stakeholders and with you and Ministry officials as together we strive to ensure that quality assurance is a shared responsibility among post-secondary institutions, the Ministry, and Council.

We look forward to working with the Ministry to meet the best interests of learners and to ensure that high quality degree programs will continue to be available to learners. Council looks forward to providing you with an update on our 2012-15 Action Plan in our 2012-13 Annual Report.

Ronald Bond
Chair

Mandate

Established under section 108 of the *Post-secondary Learning Act (Act)*, the Campus Alberta Quality Council is an arms-length quality assurance agency that has been established to advance the quality of the post-secondary system in Alberta and is accountable to the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology (Minister). The Council is an advisory body whose primary responsibility is to provide advice and recommendations to the Minister on applications from post-secondary institutions seeking to offer new degree programs in Alberta under the terms of the *Act* and the Programs of Study Regulation (91/2009). The Council also has a responsibility to review and monitor degree programs to ensure that they meet its expectations of quality.

Operating Principles

Principle 1 – The Council standards are appropriate to the program level/scope and are comparable to national and international standards. Within this context, Council is open to flexibility and innovation in degree programming.

Principle 2 – The best interests of learners are at the core of Council's activities as it assesses and monitors the quality of degree programs.

Principle 3 – The Council respects the foundational role of academic freedom in the provision of high quality post-secondary programs.

Principle 4 – Peer evaluation is an essential component of the Council's evaluation of post-secondary degree programs.

Principle 5 – Stakeholder participation is an integral part of the degree appraisal process.

Principle 6 – The Council acts to develop and retain autonomy from influences that may undermine or otherwise affect trust in its functions and decisions.

Principle 7 – The Council exhibits equity in all aspects of its operation.

Principle 8 – The Council exhibits and promotes openness and transparency in all its practices and policies.

Principle 9 – Processes established by the Council may be iterative in nature when, in Council's opinion, a proposed degree program has the potential for development and improvement.

Principle 10 – Within the context of its iterative processes, the Council acts expeditiously and in keeping with principles of natural justice.

Principle 11 – The Council is committed to the quality assurance review of its own activities and to the interprovincial sharing of best practices in post-secondary degree program quality assessment.

Principle 12 – The Council exhibits and promotes appreciation of institutional diversity and respect for institutional autonomy and integrity among the institutions proposing degree programs.

Principle 13 – The Council ensures that approved degree programs and Council decisions with respect to them are monitored and the extent of monitoring is appropriate to the experience of the institution.

Principle 14 – Members and peer reviewers shall act in accordance with ethical standards and abide by Council's code of conduct which includes provisions on conflict of interest.

Principle 15 – The Council recognizes that the primary responsibility for academic and institutional quality assurance rests with post-secondary institutions themselves.

Goals and Priority Initiatives

Respecting its mandate, the Campus Alberta Quality Council has two core businesses:

Core Business 1 — Provide advice and recommendations to the Minister with respect to new degree program proposals.

Core Business 2 — Monitor approved degree programs after their implementation.

As an advisory agency reporting to the Minister, Council attempts to align its planned activities with the strategic priorities of Advanced Education and Technology (AET). Council's current three-year plan relates CAQC's future work to the following goal and priority initiative in AET's 2012-15 Business Plan:

AET Goal One: A globally recognized, quality advanced learning system that meets the needs of Alberta.

Priority Initiative 1.3 Implement strategies that align quality assurance, program approval and accountability mechanisms to promote excellence, innovation and sustainability within the advanced learning system.

Council has outlined three goals, along with priority initiatives and strategies for achieving these goals.

Goal 1 CAQC's quality review processes are well-developed, efficient and evidence-based.

Priority Initiatives:

1.1 Enhance the evaluation of graduate program proposals by revising Council's graduate assessment standards and guidelines in cooperation with institutional stakeholders.

1.2 Support collaboration within Campus Alberta by ensuring that new collaborative degree arrangements, developed on the basis of the programs approved on Council's recommendation, meet Council's quality standards and conditions.

1.3 Refine Council's quality assessment processes and guidelines with respect to program proposals from non-resident institutions.

Goal 2 Degree programs approved on recommendation of CAQC continue to meet Council's quality standards and conditions.

Priority Initiatives:

2.1 Align CAQC's expectations and practices to reflect Council's new monitoring principles.

2.2 In collaboration with the Alberta Universities Association (AUA) and the Ministry, complete a two-year Quality Assurance Audit Pilot Project.

2.3 Develop a Framework for Comprehensive Evaluations for use by Council's comprehensive evaluation review teams.

2.4 Work with the Ministry to ensure alignment of Council's monitoring practices with AET's priority initiative 1.3.

Goal 3 Council effectively communicates and collaborates with its stakeholders to maintain trust and serve the best interests of learners.

Priority Initiatives:

3.1 **Increase Council's communication with its institutional stakeholders to enhance their understanding of Council's role and processes.**

3.2 **Through Council's Chair, enhance regular communication with the Minister and senior Ministry officials.**

3.3 **Through Council's Secretariat, enhance consultation with the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada's Quality Assurance Subcommittee and post-secondary quality assurance agencies in Canada.**